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As people are brought into this world, it is no secret that there will be wondrous moments that person may experience with infinite possibilities. There can be many laughs shared, many hugs given, and many praises heard. These are just the little pieces that makes this existence worthwhile but on the flipside of that coin, there can be terrible moments that could be endured. Just like there are many plausibility of happiness, there can be the same amount in the avenue of despair. Such tribulations that a person can experience is the tumultuous journey into the heartache of substance abuse or dependency. The interesting and fascinating about addiction is that it doesn't discriminate and is willing to take any soul into that depth of despair, present author included. Addiction is an interesting and pesky ailment where it can stem from either source such as genealogy or traumatic event, causing havoc in a person's life, and what that reign of terror had shaped that person to be, good or bad.

My upbringing is a story from a good background from great parents, being raised to be a proper gentleman and someone who is competent, and was greatly spoiled with knowledge, experiences, and culture. My father spent twenty years in the army, and I was fortunate to see the world and when I came to the proper age, I too decided to join the army. The job I wanted was to be a combat medic so when I graduated June of 2002, I left my home for basic training. I graduated from medic school early 2003 and was sent to duty station and unit, which was an infantry unit. I was not at my unit very long before we were given orders to go to Iraq, which we were there from December 2003 to March 2005, a total of 15 months. In that duration, I saw a lot, I lost a lot, and I endure a lot. When I came back from this deployment, my close family did notice that the version of Ben that is in front of them was not the same person that was before Iraq. I used copious amounts of alcohol to try and cure the pain that was from within, utilizing the old method of consuming external solutions for internal issues. I must mention that before the

army, I have never ingested any form of narcotics but after, I became a fan of stimulants. It started with cocaine and eventually graduated to crystal methamphetamines.

While embarking on this volunteer chaotic journey, I was still trying to balance this insane act of being a good soldier and then eventually husband and father, and a good addict. Whenever I would come home on leave, I would make up reasons to disappear so I can get high, not taking care of my family. I was a medic who enthralled on taking care of people and here I am avoiding the people I love just to get high. This type of ritual and practice went out and slowly gaining speed to the inevitable event of me losing everything. On Father's Day of 2009, I was visiting my parents' home on leave because my unit was scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan that August. I wanted to experience my first Father's Day with my parents, but this time of happiness was cut very short. The reason this joyous occasion was cut short is because well, me being a good addict, my wife and I at the time got into a terrible fight and she left to go to her parent's house and I then began to drink a copious amount of alcohol. That Father's Day, I had received a super extreme D.U.I. in Chandler, Arizona. I had informed my command and I was able to still deploy to Afghanistan as my unit's senior medic but was not allowed to reenlist due to criminal matters needed to be taken care of. On June 3rd, 2011, I was out of the army and now I felt like a three-time loser because I had to get out of the career I loved, facing jail time, and getting a divorce. After jailtime, I wish I can say I pieced my life back together, but that would be a total farce.

The years from 2012 to February 8th, 2015, I had found myself in this cyclitic actions of insanity; have a job to feed my meth habit, get high, reach a point of despair, and promise myself to get clean and stop this. I would be doing well and then the ill thought of "I can control this" pops back in my mind and that cycle would kickstart all over again. The difference between each

cyclic period is that I keep losing more than what I had the last time. I had found myself at a point where when I had finally surrendered to this addiction and admitted I was powerless, amazing things began to happen. I was fortunate to be accepted into the inpatient recovery program at the VA Hospital and I was an inpatient for 4 months. While in this haven, I was able to converse with several amazing counselors that were immaculate at addressing my addiction and also the other mental ailments that I had incurred from traumatic events from deployments. While seeking treatment and following these amazing advices, I have noticed that there was this fire of passion that has been reignited. I hated myself for so long for allowing myself to participate in asinine behaviors and not seek help. While going through treatment, I had found my new purpose, I wanted to be a beacon of hope to fellow veterans who are suffering from my issues. After I completed my inpatient treatment, I had constructed a plan of what I needed to do so that I could become a mental health counselor.

It would've been very easy for me to continue that trend of not seeking treatment, but I am grateful I followed the advice of that one counselor who showed me hope. That is what I want to do, at least once. I am currently enrolled into the University of Phoenix master's program from Mental Health Counseling and excited about this new journey in my academics. I know I will do well and if my past pain can offer some light to a fellow veteran that was as lost as I was, then all that pain will be worth it. This beautiful thing called life is hard enough, there shouldn't be any reason for a person willing to continue to participate the acts of addiction.